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AUTHOR Hayes, Daniel T.
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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted among four area high schools participating in the John Wood Community College (Illinois) Escrow Program, which extends college credit to high school seniors taking specific courses offered by the high school, in order to determine the extent of student interest in the program. Administered to 52 Escrow students and 53 non-Escrow students, the questionnaire results indicated that: the high school students generally supported the Escrow concept, with over 71% of the Escrow participants and 65% of the non-participants wanting more college-level courses available during the senior year; the transferability of Escrow credit hours to colleges and universities was a concern of students uncertain about Escrow participation; non-participants attending classes offered for both high school and college credit were unaware that participants were subject to more difficult requirements; and, the typical $36 fee for a three-credit Escrow course was felt reasonable, and it appeared that a scholarship program aimed at those students who listed cost as a reason for not participating would not effectively increase student enrollment in the program. The survey instrument is appended. (LH)

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ATTITUDES OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TOWARD THE ESCROW PROGRAM AT JOHN WOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE QUINCY, ILLINOIS

by

Daniel T. Hayes

Institutional Research Report No. 6

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ATTITUDES OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TOWARD THE JWCC ESCROW PROGRAM

by Dan Hayes

Rationale

Although the John Wood Community College Escrow Program that was implemented nearly two years ago represents a unique, innovative concept for the participating high schools throughout District 539, the notion to extend college credit to high school students during the senior year is not new. Many such opportunities are now being made available to high school students throughout post-secondary educational institutions. For example, City Wide College--Chicago several years ago initiated the College Acceleration Program, a program whereby City Wide faculty members travel into area high schools to teach college courses to college-bound seniors. Syracuse University has a nationally recognized program called Project Advance in which the instruction for college credit is provided by high school teachers during the regular school day. Project Advance has been in existence over five years, involves some sixty New York high schools, and has extended college credit to over four-thousand high school seniors.

Because the JWCC Escrow Program has been in existence only two years, there has been only a very limited opportunity to collect data about the program. It was believed that a questionnaire completed by Escrow participants and non-participants would be helpful in determining the extent of student interest in the program, evaluating and improving the concept, and maintaining greater

control over the program. In addition, it was assumed, the instrument could provide needed answers to questions such as:

(1) Why do students elect or not choose to participate?

(2) Do participating and non-participating students have different attitudes toward the concept of making college credit available to high school seniors?

(3) Are Escrow students subject to stiffer course requirements in order to earn college credit?

(4) Is the cost of the program reasonable for the high school senior? and

(5) Are students generally aware of the program, and if given more information, would more students enroll?

Finally, it was believed that the results, when shared with principals and counselors of area high schools that did not participate in the program, might assist in the decision as to whether to implement new Escrow courses throughout non-participating high schools.

Procedures

Therefore, a questionnaire[1] was designed to be administered throughout the four participating area high schools to two groups of students: (a) those persons currently enrolled for one or more Escrow courses for JWCC credit, and (b) those individuals not presently enrolled in any high school course for Escrow credit. Once permission was given by the cooperating high school principals, questionnaires were mailed to Escrow teachers. Each Escrow instructor was asked to administer the surveys to as many Escrow students as possible plus an approximately equal amount of randomly selected non-participants. Completed surveys were then

[1] A copy of the questionnaire appears in the appendix.

returned to JWCC or collected by a JWCC representative. A total of 52 Escrow students completed the questionnaire, while 53 non-Escrow students completed the surveys.

Results

One of the purposes of the investigation was to discover the reasons cited by students for participation or non-participation. Table 1 includes a summary of the most frequently listed reasons for participation among students enrolled for at least one Escrow course. As the data indicate, most students who participated recognized the advantage of obtaining a "headstart at college, and nearly as many students believed that the low cost of taking a course contributed to their decision to enroll.

TABLE 1

REASONS FOR PARTICIPATION

Number Students Citing	Reason
43	The Escrow Program gives me a chance to get a "head-start" at college.
39	The cost of taking an Escrow course was reasonable.
35	I plan to attend a college other than JWCC and wanted the credit.
33	The Escrow Program enables me to complete general, required courses that I would have to take at college anyway.
13	I plan to attend JWCC.
12	I merely wanted the experience of having taken a college-level course for credit.
1	Others

Table 2 includes a summary of the most frequently cited reasons for non-participation among the high school students surveyed.

TABLE 2

REASONS FOR NON-PARTICIPATION

Number Students Citing	Reason
23	I plan to attend a college other than JWCC.
20	I was uncertain as to whether the credit would transfer.
12	Even though I could afford it, I did not want to pay for the course to get college credit.
12	I was not given enough information to know what the program was really about.
10	The courses were not of interest to me; they did not fit my needs.
8	I do not plan to attend college.
7	I could not afford to take a course ($36 for a typical course).
5	Others

Students who plan to attend institutions other than JWCC indicated some concern about the transferability of Escrow credit, and this concern appeared to contribute to their non-participation. The cost of taking a course did not appear to be prohibitive for most of the non-participants.

A second major portion of the questionnaire involved student attitudes toward the Escrow concept. Students were asked to (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) indicate indecision, (4) disagree, or (5) strongly disagree with a series of statements about the Escrow Program. Table 3 presents each statement that was responded to by Escrow participants. For each statement listed, the numbers in parentheses represent the mean, standard deviation, and number

of students who responded (as some students elected not to answer all items).

TABLE 3

ATTITUDES OF PARTICIPANTS

I believe the Escrow Program is a worthwhile concept because it gives a high school senior a "headstart" toward completing a college education. (1.440, .540, n=50)
The instruction I am getting in the Escrow course(s) I am taking is just as challenging and/or worthwhile as the type of instruction I believe I would get in a regular college course. (1.961, .739, n=52)
I believe that the cost of taking a course through the Escrow Program is reasonable. (1.725, .750, n=51)
I am not expected to do more work than the regular high school students attending the Escrow class. (3.178, 1.339, n=51)
I would like more information relative to JWCC activities and events, library privileges, etc. (2.380, .923, n=50)
I am dissatisfied with the instruction I am getting through the Escrow courses; in my opinion, the material is not "college-level" in terms of difficulty. (4.265, .784, n=49)
I wish more courses could have been offered at my high school through the Escrow Program. (1.980, .836, n=51)
Persons who receive college credit for courses through the Escrow Program should be required to do more work than the regular high school student in order to receive credit. (3.117, 1.142, n=51)
JWCC should establish an Escrow Scholarship Program to help students with the cost of taking a college-level course. (2.540, .952, n=50)

Table 4 presents each statement that the non-Escrow students were asked to respond to. Again, for each statement, the mean, standard deviation, and number of cases on which the statistics are based are provided within parentheses.

TABLE 4

ATTITUDES OF NON-PARTICIPANTS

Once I find out what Escrow courses will be offered next semester, I will seriously consider enrolling. (3.153, 1.036, n=52)
I would enroll in an Escorw course if I could qualify for some type of a JWCC Escrow Scholarship. (2.943, 1.133, n=53)

To be cont'd.

Table 4 cont'd

I feel as though I'm largely uninformed about the Escrow Program. (3.526, 1.097, n=52)

In those classes attended by regular high school and Escrow students, the regular student does just as much work as the person getting college credit. (2.961, 1.327, n=52)

Persons who receive college credit for taking certain advanced courses through the Escrow Program should be required to do more work than the regular high school student in order to receive credit. (2.576, 1.143, n=52)

The cost of taking an Escrow course is reasonable. (2.019, .874, n=52)

The Escrow Program is worthwhile because it can give a high school senior a "headstart" toward completing a college education. (1.846, .801, n=52)

I wish more courses could have been offered at my high school through the Escrow Program. (2.096, .975, n=52)

As can be noted from Tables 3 and 4, several of the attitudinal statements that were responded to by the two groups were similar. Therefore, in order to determine if there was a difference among the two groups for similar or identical items, statistical tests were applied. Specifically, an independent t test was employed to determine if the two groups had significantly different attitudes on each of four statements presented to both sample groups. Table 5 presents each statement that was administered to both the Escrow and non-Escrow students. The figures in parentheses include the means for the two groups as well as the t value associated with the difference. Significantly different means (two-tailed test) are noted with an asterisk.

TABLE 5

DIFFERENCES AMONG ESCROW AND NON-ESCROW GROUPS

The Escrow Program is a worthwhile concept because it gives a high school senior a "headstart" toward completing a college education. (1.440, 1.846, t=.94)	
I wish more courses could have been offered at my high school through the Escrow Program. (1.980, 2.096, t=.63)	
I believe the cost of taking an Escrow course ($36 for a typical course) is reasonable. (1.725, 2.019, t=.57)	
Persons who receive college credit for Escrow courses should be required to do more work than the regular high school student in order to receive credit. (3.117, 2.576, t=2.37*)	

*sig. at .05 (df = 101)

As can be seen from the data in Table 5, both groups believed the concept is worthwhile, that the costs are reasonable, and they expressed a desire for more Escrow courses through the high school. The only significant difference between the two groups involved the work requirements that the two groups believed should be imposed upon Escrow students.

Another consideration involved the need to determine whether students who are enrolled for high school credit in courses with Escrow students believe the Escrow students are subject to stiffer requirements. Of the total number of 53 non-Escrow students, only 43 reported that they were currently taking a high school course being taken by an Escrow student for college credit. Generally, the non-Escrow students believed that Escrow students do no more work for college credit than the regular high school student (mean = 2.683, standard deviation = 1.430), although there was so much variability in the scores that the results seemed inconclusive on the issue.

Another purpose of the investigation involved the cost of the program to the student and whether JWCC should consider establishing some type of scholarship program to cover the cost for some students. Generally, the two sample groups believed the costs ($36 for a typical course) were justified; less than 5 percent of the total number of students surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "...the cost of taking an Escrow course is reasonable." In order to determine whether cost served as a prohibitive factor for some students and whether some type of scholarship would remove the cost barrier, the responses of non-participants who indicated cost as a primary reason for non-participation were analyzed. This group represented only 30 percent of the non-Escrow sample. When asked whether JWCC should establish a scholarship to assist with the cost of taking a course, the sub-group indicated neither agreement nor disagreement (2.937, SD 1.181). Morecver, only 36 percent of the total sample of non-participants indicated they would enroll for an Escrow course if JWCC established some type of scholarship. Thus, it appeared that even though some students viewed cost as a barrier, removal of the cost barrier in the form of a JWCC scholarship would not necessarily lead to increased participation.

Conclusions

Based on the limited data that was collected through this first evaluation of student attitudes toward the Escrow Program, several conclusions can be reached. First, the high school students surveyed clearly support the Escrow concept; the students like the

notion of being able to combine high school and college studies during the senior year. Over 71 percent of the Escrow participants expressed a desire to see more college-level courses become available during the senior year of high school, and 65 percent of the non-participants wished more Escrow courses could have been offered during the senior year.

Second, the transferability of Escrow credit hours needs to be stressed to high school students, particularly insofar as the student who is uncertain about participation is concerned. At present, JWCC officials know of no instances where JWCC Escrow credit was rejected solely on the basis that the student completed the credit as a high school senior and did not attend classes on a college campus. On the contrary, if school officials at the institution the student desires to attend are willing to accept other forms of JWCC credit, it would appear that students would have no difficulty in transferring the credit hours. In any event, a piece of research currently in progress at JWCC will help to resolve student apprehensions about transferability of Escrow credit hours. Admissions personnel at over fifty four-year colleges and universities throughout Illinois are being contacted relative to the transferability of college credit earned during the senior year. Results of the investigation will provide information about each four-year college's policy concerning college credit accumulated during high school and will be made available to high school counselors and principals within community college district 539. This information should serve to alleviate student apprehensions about the program.

Third, Escrow teachers should stress the notion in those classes attended by both Escrow participants and non-participants that students getting college credit for the class will be expected to perform at a higher level in order to receive credit. In other words, since some students attending the class may be receiving college credit while other students elect to earn high school credit, the instructor should make it clear to all students that Escrow participants will be subject to slightly more difficult requirements. For example, while the regular high school student would not be expected to complete certain types of assignments in a course (such as writing a term paper), the Escrow student would be required to do so.

Finally, costs of the program for the high school student appear reasonable and justified; most can afford the typical $36 for a three-credit course. In addition, it does not appear that a scholarship program aimed at the student who currently lists cost as a reason for non-participation would be effective in increasing student enrollment. There appear to be other reasons besides cost that are responsible for the student's decision not to enroll, and a JWCC Escrow Scholarship probably would not remove such factors.

APPENDIX

JWCC ESCROW QUESTIONNAIRE

High School Attending_____

1. Are you aware that your high school offers selected courses for seniors through the John Wood Community College Escrow Program? Yes____ No_____

2. Are you currently taking an advanced high school course for college credit through the Escrow Program? Yes_____ No_____

   If so, what course(s)?_____

   _____

   _____

3. Are you currently enrolled in any course for high school credit that is attended by Escrow students who receive JWCC credit for the course? Yes_____ No_____ Don't know_____

4. If you answered "no" on question 2, please indicate with a check mark or marks the reason(s) why you did not enroll in a JWCC Escrow course during the first semester. You may indicate as many reasons as you wish.

   _____ I was not given enough information to know what the Escrow Program is really about.

   _____ The Escrow courses available at my high school were not of interest to me; none of the Escrow courses appealed to me and the program did not fit my needs.

   _____ I could not afford the cost ($36 for a typical course).

   _____ Even though I could have afforded the cost of taking a course for Escrow credit, I did not want to pay approximately $36 for a course and did not enroll.

   _____ I plan to attend a college other than JWCC.

   _____ I was uncertain whether the JWCC Escrow credit would transfer to the college I plan to attend.

   _____ I do not plan to attend college.

   _____ I didn't feel as though I could do the work required in a course offered for college credit.

   _____ I am against the Escrow concept; high schools should only offer courses for high school credit, and colleges should not offer credit to some seniors for taking advanced high school courses.

Other Reasons?_____

_____

_____

5. If you answered "no" on question 2, please respond to the following statements by indicating whether you (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) are undecided, (4) disagree, or (5) strongly disagree.

_____ Once I find out what Escrow courses will be offered at my high school during the second semester, I will seriously consider enrolling.

_____ I would enroll in an Escrow course if I could qualify for some type of a JWCC Escrow Scholarship.

_____ I feel as though I'm largely uninformed about the Escrow Program.

_____ In my opinion, in those high school classes attended by regular high school students and Escrow students receiving college credit for the class, the regular high school student does just as much work as the person getting college credit.

_____ Persons who receive college credit for taking certain advanced courses through the Escrow Program should be required to do more work than the regular high school student in order to receive credit.

_____ I believe the cost of taking an Escrow course ($36 for a typical course) is reasonable.

_____ The Escrow Program is worthwhile because it can give a high school senior a "head start" toward completing a college education.

_____ I wish more courses could have been offered at my high school through the Escrow Program.

6. If you answered "yes" on question 2, please indicate with a check mark or marks the reason(s) why you enrolled in a JWCC Escrow course during the first semester. You may indicate as many reasons as you wish.

_____ I plan to attend JWCC.

_____ I plan to attend a college other than JWCC and wanted the credit.

_____ The cost of taking an Escrow course was reasonable.

_____ I merely wanted the experience of having taken a college-level course for credit.

_____ The Escrow Program gives me a chance to get a "headstart" at college.

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_____ The Escrow Program enables me to complete general, required courses that I would have to take at college anyway.

Other Reasons?_____

_____

_____

7. If you answered "yes" on Question 2, please respond to the following items. Indicate your response by specifying whether you (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) are undecided, (4) disagree, or (5) strongly disagree.

_____ I believe the Escrow Program is a worthwhile concept because it gives a high school senior a "head start" toward completing a college education.

_____ The instruction I am getting in the Escrow course(s) I am taking is just as challenging and/or worthwhile as the type of instruction I believe I would get in a regular college course.

_____ I believe that the cost of taking a course through the Escrow Program is reasonable.

_____ Even though I receive college credit through Escrow for a course being attended by regular high school students, I am not expected to do more work than regular high school students attending the class.

_____ Since my enrollment in an Escrow course makes me a part-time JWCC student, I would like more information relative to JWCC activities and events, library privileges, etc.

_____ I am dissatisfied with the instruction I am getting through the Escrow course(s) I am taking; in my opinion, the material is not "college-level" in terms of difficulty.

_____ I wish more courses could have been offered at my high school through the Escrow Program.

_____ Persons who receive college credit for taking certain advanced courses through the Escrow Program should be required to do more work than the regular high school student in order to receive credit.

_____ JWCC should establish an Escrow Scholarship Program to help students with the cost of taking a college-level course.